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BIRD-NESTING EXTRAORDINARY.

It was the end of September, and a month of pretty constant shooting, followed up by a fortnight of almost unbroken wind and rain, had had its natural effect upon the grouse. The coveys that a little before had been scattered in pleasant profusion along the hillsides, and in the deep rank heather in the corries, had now drawn together into huge packs, that rose before our guns in a long brown line of birds at the distance of half the width of an English parish. Whitworths sighted for the longest range might have done some little execution now and then, but as for our breech-loaders, we might just as well have left them at home; and had it not been that occasionally we dropped over the shoulder of a rising-ground on some solitary cock, whose unsocial habits and morose disposition proved his destruction, we might as well ourselves have stayed at home with them. Despite such stray shots, to men satiated with previous slaughter, the game was scarcely worth the candle: continual drenchings, moreover, began to pall upon us; from the little kitchen rolled up a continual haze—the evaporation from kilts, shooting-coats, and knickerbockers in process of drying, that filled the passage that led to it, and more or less pervaded the rest of the shooting-lodge, till, in our limited accommodation, we must have felt much like the forecastle-men of a fast clipper in an ocean-race from China, when her sharp bows and steerage accommodation are more often under the waves than above them.

Suddenly, one morning, we awoke to the phenomenon of a flood of sunshine gilding the watery landscape. The larches around the lodge, with their loads of raindrops, were flashing like so many Christmas-trees lighted up by countless wax-lights, and the drenched heather glanced like a crimson footcloth, sewn with diamonds, in a transformation scene. The black masses of clouds, hanging on the mountains that closed in the distant view, seemed to foretell anything but settled weather; but, notwithstanding, its present brightness was reflected in the faces that met at the breakfast-

table; and if the barometer on the wall, as it pointed malignantly to 'much rain,' chastened our gaiety, like the death's-head at the feast, yet it was with more vivacity than had been our habit of late mornings that we discussed the plans of the day. Grouse-shooting was dismissed as hopeless; and suggestions as to trying ptarmigan or mountain-hares on the upper ranges were outvoted on the score of the threatening state of the weather. Finally, a proposal to drag the lake, in order to vary the eternal mutton and everlasting grouse, the standing dishes of the table in a remote shooting-box, was carried almost unanimously. For myself, although admitting the seductions of *truite Écossaise*, *sauce aux cèdres*, and *brochet au vin de Bordeuz*, I had different plans. Pleading, as was very true, a desire for more active exercise, and a preference for a stroll on the hill to a lounge by the lake, I saw the rest of the party start for their sport, the keeper and a couple of gillies pulling a heavy coble, loaded with nets, to the place where it was to begin. No sooner were they well round the corner, than my own arrangements were yet more speedily concluded. I stowed away pipe and tobacco, whisky and powder flasks, a ship-biscuit and a few bullets in their several pockets, slung to my back a telescope and a mackintosh, took down my rifle from the gun-rack in the passage, saw that the hollow in its stock was duly filled with patches, and, stepping out on the little green before the lodge, crossed the road that ran in front of it, and set my face to the steep hill beyond.

My movements had been shrouded in mystery, because, if my game was not the wild-goose, my friends might have said it was much the same thing. Our ground was all sheep-farm and grouse-moor; the upper part of it as wild and steep walking as any in the north; hill rose upon hill, buttressing the rocky summit of Ben Aline, the admired of tourists, and the landmark for three Highland counties. Its sides broke away into deep rocky corries, often carpeted by the freshest and richest of herbage, while from the long bare shoulder and the cairn which formed its highest ridge, the northern side sank abruptly in a jumble of sheer

precipices. It would have been a very sanctuary for deer, had not the sheep and sheep-dogs on the moors below scared away any stray wanderers from the adjoining forests. It was more like a bit of scenery from the royal Bavarian hunting-grounds that hang over the Königsee; there, or in the Austrian highlands, you would have called it the very place for a chamois. Although, unfortunately, the Society of Acclimatisation has not turned its attention to the introduction of that noble game, it was in a humble imitation of chamois-hunting that my expedition was undertaken.

Some years before, the last occupants of a little hamlet in the valley below, banished by the advances of scientific sheep-farming, had shipped themselves and their belongings for the Canadas. Among their other chattels were a couple of he-goats, which they had left a legacy to their ungrateful country, either because their tough old carcasses would have fetched nothing in the market, or because, having already 'taken to the hill,' it had been found impossible to secure their living persons. Be that as it may, since then they had led a life of savage independence on the rocky sides of Ben Aline. In summer, it was doubtless pleasant enough; but how they had 'scaped famine and snow-drifts in winter was more surprising. Having at first been occasionally chased and fired at, they had become so suspicious of man in every guise, that it would have puzzled the best stalker in the Highlands to get within range of them. Now, however, as no one had troubled his head about them for some years, it had occurred to me that this feeling of indifference might have grown proportionately on both sides. In any case, it would kill a day not unpleasantly to make the trial; no one need be privy to my failure; while it would be no small triumph to nail to the walls of the shooting-lodge the head of the wary old patriarch who had so often gazed down on its roof from the hills above.

It was in vain, however, after attaining to the flat peat-bog that, crowning the lower hills, stretched round the skirts of Ben Aline, I scanned the side of that mountain. Squatted in a peat-hag, my head and arms buried in its heather-fringe, I turned the glass on every patch of green and purple, and tried to disengage the outlines of each rock and stone, in case the colours of the quarry should be blended with them. I satisfied myself that if there at all, they must be entirely hidden from sight in some depression, so I rose and walked boldly across to the mountain, in the hope that, even if alarmed, they would only slip round the shoulder, and thus shew me their whereabouts. Nothing, however, stirred, except here and there a mountain-hare; and I wound my way up the side, like a devout Catholic pilgrim, making my stations, glass at eye, wherever a fresh ridge opened up a new bit of hill. Nothing, however, repaid my pains; and after an hour and a half of stiff climbing, I stood on the long weather-beaten ridge of lichen-covered granite that led to the upper cairn, hardly caring longer to keep myself concealed, for if the goats were on the northern side, my task would be hopeless. Engrossed in my quest as I had been, I had scarcely regarded the weather; but, as I neared the summit, the clouds that had gradually been rolling their black masses before each inch of blue sky, burst upon me in a deluge. The stones under my feet had, a moment before, thanks to the slight wind, been as dry as

the London pavement in the dog-days, already my iron-clamped boots were slipping about on their drenched surface, as I ran through the driving sheet of water that plashed from them in tumblingfuls, for the friendly shelter of the cairn. There, as well as I could, I put both myself and my rifle into their waterproof cases, and seeing nothing for it but patience, with a pull at my flask, crouched down among the granite blocks on the sheltered side. I had not long to wait; the gust was too violent to last, and, in ten minutes, the sun burst out over my head, brighter and warmer than ever; while, down to windward, the shower was blown rapidly before the wind, the sunlight glancing in all the colours of the rainbow on the lead-coloured mass of falling water. Emerging from my chrysalis-like covering, I shook myself, filled and lit a pipe with streaming fingers that almost extinguished the Vesuvian, and strolling forward to the edge of the ridge, devoted myself, with a feeling of intense relief and enjoyment, to the appreciation of the magnificent prospect. For the first few moments, my eyes were riveted to the grand forms of the more distant mountains; slowly they travelled back over loch and hill to the picturesque foreground of gray precipices that sank down sheer to the heather table-land beneath. I raised my foot to kick a stone down the side of the mountain, when the sight that met me arrested it in the air. Stealthily, as if the motion of my arm might be heard, I removed my pipe from my lips, looking with remorse at the puffs of smoke that were rising on the tainted air. Fortunately, what wind there was still set steadily in my face, blowing as it did high above the corries that twisted it into strange currents below, for there, not seventy yards below me, and one at least as intent on the landscape as myself, were the objects of my quest. A square block of granite formed the pedestal for the statue-like form of a picturesque old he-goat, his weather-bleached hair hanging in tangled masses over his lanky sides and down his muscular thighs. His eye was fixed doubtless on some distant shepherd or sheep-dog, invisible to me, but which had engrossed his keen faculties. Chamois should always, if possible, be approached from above; probably it is the same with goats. At all events, the tactics I had unconsciously adopted, seemed likely to prove fatal to my shaggy friends. The other and smaller goat was nibbling a tuft of grass, his broadside half turned to me. Now that the prize seemed almost in my grasp, I felt nervously anxious that it should not slip through my fingers. Slipping down on the stones, I quietly forced off my wet boots, and then, in comparative peace of mind, hurried to the cairn, re-capped my rifle, and retraced my steps. My friends had hardly changed their attitude, and the old patriarch, though the less certain mark, was irresistibly tempting. Seating myself for an instant to give my hand time to steady itself, I quietly covered him behind the shoulders, and fired. Hurrah! down he went, his four inverted hoofs vanishing over the rock, side by side with the back of his comrade, who reappeared lower down, very sufficiently startled, as he descended the mountain in bounds of thirty feet at a time.

So far so good, but I had still to get at my game, if I meant to secure the head. Craning over, I caught a glimpse of the veteran as he rested on a shelf of rock far below—his tough frame apparently little the worse for the tumble, and his head half buried in its luxuriant beard, hanging backwards

over the rock. It was not an easy place to reach, and if it was to be done at all, it could only be by finding my way along a ledge that, running round the side of the mountain, would land me some little way below him. A rope and companions would evidently be desirable accessories, and had it been a stag I had killed, I should certainly have returned for help. As it was, having my doubts whether an order to scale Ben Aline for an old goat might not breed mutiny among the gillies, I resolved to go at it alone and unaided. Had the ledge not been slippery from the rain, the walking would have been pleasant enough. It widened out into a platform just below the place where the goat was lying, and, as good-luck would have it, there was, moreover, a cleft in the rock between the one shelf and the other, an awkward staircase, certainly, even for a chimney-sweep or a monkey, and had it not been something within the perpendicular, I should have renounced it in despair. As it was, I went at it, having previously laid down my rifle and other *impedimenta*, and removed my heavy boots. Thanks to the latter precaution, I could just find some sort of foothold, though the friable stone crumbled unpleasantly under my feet and fingers. It was an unmistakable case of holding on by the eyelids, and I did not care to glance down between my legs, although I knew if once I slipped, that I should never stop on the shelf I started from. Nothing of the sort happened, until just as I placed my hands on the ledge above, when the pressure of my knee detached a square foot or two of stone panelling, which went bounding from rock to rock into space below. Luckily, my other knee held good, and with a scramble and a shudder, I landed myself in safety beside my slaughtered victim.

My first glance was at him, my next on the place I had just struggled up by, and I felt something of a cold chill run through me as I saw that the descent, always dangerous, had become almost impracticable, thanks to the fall of the fragment. For some four or five feet, there was no sort of a footing to be found, and even then it would be a perilously slight one. He who, descending from a lofty stage-coach, has searched for the step with tentative foot that dangled in the air, may realise my prospects, with the vaguest of notches to rest on, and the most picturesque of precipices yawning below. Looking round me for some other way out of the dilemma, I found confirmation of the old proverb, that troubles never come singly. The part of the ledge where the goat was lying was indeed swept clean by wind and rain, but it sloped backwards in an irregular cavity, sheltered by the overhanging rock behind, and this was thickly strewn with pellets of fur and feathers, and bones of every shade and hue, from those bleached by the winter storms to others from which the flesh had been stripped but yesterday. In the farthest nook, and where such *débris* lay thickest, a pair of half-fledged eaglets huddled themselves together, each feather ruffled up in the agitation of the wearers at their first introduction to the human form divine. Their distended pupils already flashed a half-startled, half-savage defiance, which their gaping beaks seemed ready to back up to the best of their immature ability. I delight in studying the habits of birds, whether in the Regent's Park, on Highland hill, or in English copse; as an enthusiastic ornithologist even, I have often deplored the diminishing numbers of that magnificent bird, the royal eagle; but at that moment, as I shuddered

at the idea of the return of the parents to their violated home, I should have paid high to see the whole family nailed to the kennel walls at the lodge below. I cast an anxious glance around on the heavens, but no specks against the clear blue sky announced the return of the old birds from their distant foraging grounds. Devoutly I prayed that game might be shy and their sport tedious, as making up my mind that, though minutes were precious, I must try and secure the head of my goat, and with an effort I dragged him back from the edge. A few strokes of the trenchant blade of my hunting-knife severed skin and flesh, but it was less easy to dissect the bone. In my haste and ignorance of the anatomy of the animal frame, I missed the joints, and only laboured myself into a profuse perspiration. In despair, I cut off the long beard, thrust it into the pocket of my knickerbockers, and rose on my knee to shove the carcass over the rock, on the chance of recovering the horns below, when I was interrupted by a rushing in the air overhead, while the sun was momentarily obscured, as if the weather threatened another downpour. They were signs yet more ominous of evil for me.

As I bounded to my feet, the act scared away a magnificent eagle, who, sweeping over the shoulder of the rock, had rested for a moment on the hover not a dozen feet above my head, taken aback, as it appeared, by the unexpected addition to his family circle. With a wild piercing shriek, he rose circling round and round before his nest, now swooping past me so close that I could feel on my heated cheek the air from his pinion, much like a Broddingnagian lapwing who tries to draw attention from her young, then sweeping away with scream upon scream, echoed and re-echoed from the rocks. In a few moments, answering cries announced the approach of his mate, and then followed a horrible duet, that must have startled every living thing for miles around. Now dashing through the air, now clinging with unquiet talons for a second to the face of the cliff, it was clear that passion was fast mastering prudence and any reluctance to a hand-to-hand struggle with man. The feathers on their necks and breasts swelled and bristled, the green sparkle of their eyes flashed concentrated malignity, and once or twice they swooped so near my shoulder that, had I struck at the moment, my knife must have cut their pinions. Instinctively, I shrunk back, and, my head and rear protected by the overhanging rock, surveyed the situation, and, as I candidly own, in mortal apprehension. No help could reach me, concealed as I was from the ground below, even should my friends miss me, and think of looking for me on that side of the mountain. There was nothing cheerful in the prospect of staying there till famine or terror should rob me of the means of defence; and could I even protect myself as I stood out on the ledge, still, the moment I should engage myself and my hands in the perilous descent from it, an attack was certain, and my fate sealed, even had the scramble downwards been ten times easier. Still, nothing was to be gained by waiting; it was evident that the longer I looked at things the less I should like them. Flashing my knife before my eyes with one hand, with the other I drew out my flask, unscrewed the top with my teeth, and took a long pull at the contents. The happy application of that stimulant was my salvation. It gave my shaken system the fillip it needed, cleared a mist

from my eyes and a cloud from my brain, and looking downwards, I had at once an inspiration. The enemy were blockading me in their own citadel, but they had left me hostages in the pair of little demons at my feet. Could I but send them to look after those sweet pledges of their affection elsewhere, I might have a few moments to beat a retreat, and once on the ledge below, I was in comparative safety.

Action followed close on the thought : seizing a fragment of rock, I hurled it towards the nearer of the old birds ; taken aback by my assuming the offensive, they swept up in a higher circle. I seized the moment and an eaglet, and, despite a stroke from its beak and a scratch from its claw, sent him flying over the ledge into the air below. With a scream of despair, the agonised parents swooped after their murdered offspring, and the next instant the other twin was taking his maiden flight in the opposite direction. Simultaneously I sprang forward ; for the moment, the blockading force was invisible ; and turning, I dropped with my hands on the edge of the rock, and committed myself to the descent.

I firmly believe that, in cooler blood, I could never have made it. As it was, at first my feet rested nowhere in particular, but in recklessness I quitted my hold above, and fortunately, and before I gained any dangerous impetus, succeeded in staying my descent for an instant by clutching at a corner of rock that my hand caught upon, at the same time almost instinctively wedging my chest in the cleft in front. The check gave me a fresh departure, and fortunately I found foothold sufficient to land me in safety on the shelf below. The reaction from despair was sharp, and my bands shook somewhat as I seized my rifle. Thus fortified against my foes of the air, I hardly thought of the lesser danger of the precipice, but walked it as confidently as I ever did the gravel-path to the lodge below. All the time, I had heard the distant cries of the eagles ; and just as I placed myself in safety on the hillside, they returned, doubtless intending to solace their parental feelings with vengeance on the author of their bereavement. Maddened by the sight of their intended victim escaping them, they ventured so very much nearer than prudence or instinct would have recommended, that I found the occasion of an easy shot at the old bird. I did not hang the head of the goat on the wall of the shooting-lodge ; but the magnificent eagle that stands on the table in the sitting-room confirms the truth of the story I told that evening over our claret.

THE PRINCE CONSORT.*

THE domesticities of royalty are certain, under any circumstances, to command the affectionate interest of a large class of well-to-do book-purchasing English families, an interest which is greatly increased when the veil is withdrawn by royal hands. But it would be unfair to ascribe the popularity of the volume before us to this obvious cause alone ; it has intrinsic merits of its own of no mean order. The materials of which it is composed

* *The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*—compiled, under the direction of Her Majesty the Queen, by Lieut.-gen. the Hon. C. Grey. London : Smith, Elder, & Co.

have been put together skilfully and thoughtfully ; and the time in which the scene is laid is just that of which the majority among us are least informed, being too modern for the pen of the historian, and too remote for accurate personal recollection.

When the Prince Consort died six years ago, there was deep emotion throughout the land ; the feeling aroused being more that of sympathy with the Queen in her bereavement than of mourning for a great national loss ; but since then, a sense of the worth of the man who had been taken away has been surely and steadily growing up among us. Most people of middle life can remember how the commencement of the present reign was overcast by reason of some serious blunders in high quarters, and how the general feeling of enthusiasm and gallantry which had been aroused at the accession of the young Queen was in danger of being extinguished, under the prevailing belief of the existence of a corrupt and selfish influence near the throne. No sooner, however, was the Queen married than the gloomy apprehensions thus excited were allayed ; and the one-and-twenty years passed in the society and under the influence of the Prince, established the Queen in the esteem and affection of the people with a security to which the position of no contemporary sovereign could offer any resemblance ; while, if we except a transient and unreasonable outburst of distrust at the commencement of the Russian war, the Prince's reputation for wisdom was high, and the integrity of his motives unimpeachable ; but for all this, so long as he lived, he could not have been said to be popular among the nation at large, still less so among the smaller circle of which the court was composed. The volume before us makes much of this intelligible. The pious industry of her Majesty has explored every nook and corner whence an anecdote or a reminiscence might by possibility be extracted. The demonstrative simplicity of the German nature has been favourable to the desire for minute detail, and the result is a vigorous, lifelike portrait of a character in which the intellect, the conscience, and the affections were in vigorous and harmonious action—one, in fact, to which a little additional dash of the animal and the impulsive elements of our nature seemed to be all that was wanting for perfection ; but this defect was no slight one in view of the position which the Prince was ultimately destined to occupy. Intellectual, active-minded, energetic, conscientious, and affectionate, he could not fail to be loved and esteemed by his intimate friends, or to make his influence felt in the world ; but withal there was a shyness, a reserve, and want of warmth, which operated unfavourably, especially upon those of rank so far equal to his own as to justify a familiar and easy intercourse ; and this was apt to be differently resented by different natures, as pride, thoughtlessness, or indifference to the feelings of those about him.

Prince Albert sprang from the elder branch of the great Saxon family. Among his remote ancestors, one name stands forth dear to all Protestants,

and familiar to all readers of European history—Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony in the sixteenth century, the friend and protector of Martin Luther.

Again, among the brothers and sisters of Ernest the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and father to the Prince, two names occur well known and respected in England—namely, Leopold, the king of the Belgians, and the Duchess of Kent, the mother to our own Queen. Duke Ernest was married to a Princess Louise of the House of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, but the union proved unhappy; and in 1824, when Prince Albert was five years old, a separation took place; after which Albert and his brother Ernest never saw their mother again. The void was supplied, as far as such a void could be, by the care and affection of the two grandmothers—the Dowager-Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, mother to Duke Ernest, and the Duchess of Gotha-Altenburg, step-mother to the banished Princess Louise. The former lady thus announces the birth of our Prince to the Duchess of Kent:

ROSENNAU, August 27, 1819.

The date will of itself make you suspect that I am sitting by Louischen's bed. She was yesterday morning safely and quickly delivered of a little boy. Siebold, the accoucheuse, had only been called at three, and at six the little one gave his first cry in the world, and looked about like a little squirrel with a pair of large black eyes. . . . How pretty the May Flower will be when I see it in a year's time! Siebold cannot sufficiently describe what a dear little love it is. *Une bonne fois*, adieu! Kiss your husband and children.

—AUGUSTA.

The 'May Flower' was the Princess Victoria; whence it appears that she and the Prince were brought into the world under the auspices of the same accoucheuse; and from the very first the desires of the Dowager-Duchess of Saxe-Coburg were directed towards accomplishing the union of the two cousins. The Queen has this memorandum of her:

'The Queen remembers her dear grandmother perfectly well. She was a most remarkable woman, with a most powerful, energetic, almost masculine mind, accompanied with great tenderness of heart, and extreme love for nature. The Prince told the Queen that she had wished earnestly that he should marry the Queen.'

At four years old, the Prince, with his elder brother, Ernest, was removed altogether from female superintendence, and placed under the care of one Herr Florschütz of Coburg, who appears to have performed the double functions of nurse and tutor with the happiest results, to judge at least by the affection with which he inspired them for himself, and the intellectual progress made by them under his auspices. The Prince remained under the care of Herr Florschütz until the year 1835, when he commenced his preparation for the university at Bonn.

In a memorandum supplied by this gentleman of his recollections of the Prince, we are struck by the insatiable desire for intellectual improvement manifested by his pupil from the earliest age, and the determination to make any sacrifice, provided he could insure a systematic prosecution of his studies.

From the very earliest age, the Prince kept a Diary, and maintained an active correspondence. Here is an extract from the journal, dated January 26, 1825, *that is* six years: 'We recited, and I cried because I could not say my repetition, for I had not paid attention. . . . I was not allowed to play after dinner, because I had cried whilst repeating.' Again, April 9, 1825: 'I got up well and happy; afterwards, I had a fight with my brother. After dinner, we went to the play.' Again, April 10: 'I had another fight with my brother. That was not right.' Count Arthur Mensdorff, one of his cousins, supplies some interesting traits of the Prince's character as a boy in a letter written to our Queen, among which the following incident is worthy of being noticed: 'Albert as a child was of a mild, benevolent disposition. It was only what he thought unjust or dishonest that could make him angry. Thus, I recollect one day when we were children, Albert, Ernest, Ferdinand, Augustus, Alexander, myself, and a few other boys were playing at the Rosenau, and some of us were to storm the old ruined tower on the side of the castle, which the others were to defend. One of us suggested that there was a place at the back by which we could get in without being seen, and thus capture it without difficulty. Albert declared that this would be most unbecoming in a Saxon knight, who should always attack the enemy in front! And so we fought for the tower so honestly and vigorously, that Albert, by mistake (for I was on his side), gave me a blow upon the nose, of which I still bear the mark. I need not say how sorry he was for the wound he had given me.' One other trait remains to be recorded to complete the sketch of the Prince's character. In early youth, he was very shy, and although he struggled hard against the defect, it is doubtful whether he ever succeeded in altogether overcoming it. The memorandum of Herr Florschütz, already quoted, gives us one remarkable instance of its working. 'On one occasion, at a ball given by the Duchess, Albert, then in his fifth year, was brought down, and a little girl was selected as his partner; but when it came to his turn to move on after the other dancers, nothing could induce him to stir, and his loud screams were heard echoing through the rooms. The Duchess thus *agreeably surprised*, exclaimed: "This comes of his good education."

The Prince first met the Queen during a visit to England with his father in 1836. They were each of them seventeen years old, and although there is no mention in his letters at this time of the impression produced upon him by the Princess, they must have had frequent opportunities of seeing and knowing each other, inasmuch as the Prince and his father were lodged at Kensington during their English visit. From that time, public expectation was generally directed to him as the future Prince Consort; so much so, that King Leopold, the Ulysses of the family, counselled a tour in Switzerland and Italy, for the purpose of diverting observation. The marriage, although warmly advocated by the Queen's relatives on her mother's side, appears to have been opposed by her father's family, especially William IV. That king died in 1837; and in the early part of 1838, the Prince visited Brussels, to discuss the all-important subject with his uncle Leopold, who writes thus of the interview: 'I have had a long conversation with Albert, and have put the whole case honestly and kindly before him.

He looks at the question from its most elevated and honourable point of view. He considers that troubles are inseparable from all human positions, and that therefore, if one must be subject to plagues and annoyances, it is better to be so for some great and worthy object, than for trifles and miseries. I have told him that his great youth would make it necessary to postpone the marriage for a few years.

.... I found him very sensible on all these points; but one thing he observed with truth: "I am ready," he said, "to submit to this delay, if I have only some certain assurance to go upon. But if, after waiting perhaps for three years, I should find that the Queen no longer desired the marriage, it would place me in a very ridiculous position, and would, to a certain extent, ruin all the prospects of my future life." On the delay thus suggested, there is the following memorandum by the Queen: "Nor can the Queen now think, without indignation against herself, of her wish to keep the Prince waiting for probably three or four years, at the risk of ruining all his prospects for life, until she might feel inclined to marry! And the Prince has since told her that he came over in 1839 with the intention of telling her, that if she could not then make up her mind, she must understand that he could not now wait for a decision, as he had done at a former period, when this marriage was first talked about.

"The only excuse the Queen can make for herself is in the fact, that the sudden change from the secluded life at Kensington to the independence of her position as Queen-regnant, at the age of eighteen, put all ideas of marriage out of her mind, which she now most bitterly repents.

"A worse school for a young girl, or one more detrimental to all natural feelings and affections, cannot well be imagined than the position of a queen at eighteen without experience, and without a husband to guide and support her. This the Queen can state from painful experience, and she thanks God that none of her dear daughters are exposed to such danger." The visit above referred to took place in the autumn of 1839, when the Prince and his brother came to stay with the Queen at Windsor. On the 15th of October, a week after their arrival, the Queen summoned the Prince to her room, and there invited him to take her to himself for wife. The Queen says that the Prince received her offer without any hesitation, and with the warmest demonstration of kindness and affection; and adds in her journal: "How I will strive to make him feel as little as possible the great sacrifice he has made."

But now there were other matters to be arranged. The young people were agreed, but the country had to be informed, a settlement obtained, and the questions of rank and precedence of the Queen's husband to be settled. In all this, Lord Melbourne, who presided over the Whigs in office, appears in the most amiable light; while Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington, who led the opposition, were committed to a very ungracious and distasteful course of action. The declaration to the Privy Council was made on the 2d of November. The Queen says: "Precisely at two, I went in. The room was full, but I hardly knew who was there. Lord Melbourne I saw looking kindly at me with tears in his eyes, but he was not near me. I then read my short declaration. I felt my hands shook, but I did not make one mistake. I felt most happy and thankful when it

was over. Lord Lansdowne then rose, and in the name of the Privy Council, asked that this most gracious and most welcome communication might be printed. I then left the room, the whole thing not lasting above two or three minutes." In January 1840, the intended marriage was declared in a speech from the throne, and the announcement elicited loyal congratulations from all parties. Contrary, however, to Lord Melbourne's expectations, the omission to declare the Prince a Protestant was severely commented upon by the Duke of Wellington and others in the House of Lords, and an amendment was carried for inserting the word Protestant in the address. Lord Brougham, in speaking on the subject, said: "My noble friend Lord Melbourne was mistaken in the law. There is no prohibition as to marriage with a Catholic. It is only attended with a penalty, and that penalty is *merely the forfeiture of the crown*." The question of the settlement was not so readily disposed of. Lord Melbourne had originally anticipated no difficulty in obtaining £50,000 a year; but he turned out grievously wrong. The sum was attacked first of all by Mr Hume and the extreme economical party, who, however, were defeated in an amendment for a reduction to £21,000 by a majority of 305 to 58. Colonel Sibthorpe, however, carried a reduction to £30,000 by 262 to 158. The eminent Conservative leaders voted with the majority, and much bitterness was imported into the debate on both sides, intensified without doubt by the recollection of Sir R. Peel's failure to form a ministry in the preceding May, in consequence, as was suspected, of intrigues among the ladies of her Majesty's household.

The question of precedence also was not settled without difficulty. It was first of all attempted, in the Act of Naturalisation introduced into the Lords, January 1840, to give the Prince "precedence for life next after her Majesty, or elsewhere, as her Majesty might think fit and proper." This was opposed successfully by the Duke of Wellington, on the ground, that no fair notice had been given, inasmuch as there was no mention of precedence in the title of the bill. Lord Brougham also pointed out that, in the event of the Prince's surviving her Majesty, he would, during the minority of a child of the marriage, be empowered to take precedence of the heir-apparent to the throne. Subsequently, the matter was settled, with the consent of all parties, by acquiescing in the Queen granting precedence (except in parliament and the Privy Council) by an act of royal prerogative. The Prince's merit rapidly and steadily allayed all prejudice against him, and his influence was most beneficially exerted to extinguish the strong political bias with which the Queen entered upon her reign. Lord Melbourne's efforts were also directed to this end. On one occasion, the Queen records that Lord Melbourne, speaking of the Prince, "said, looking at him with tears in his eyes: "There is an amazing feeling for him—there is a very favourable impression of him—every one likes him,'" and then adds: "Then speaking of the Tories, against whom the Queen was very irate, Lord Melbourne said: "You should now hold out the olive-branch a little."

We have already referred to the wisdom with which the Prince directed the Queen's character and counsels, and the beneficial result of his influence. Nothing is more apparent in this volume than the Queen's strong sense of this; and we are

sure that its publication will be beneficial, as justifying the deep and lasting affection felt by her for her husband's memory.

ONE OF THE FAMILY.

CHAPTER XIX.—ANDROCLUS.

'HAVE you anything particular to do with yourself this afternoon, Mr Blake?' inquired Claude Murphy; 'for if not, I have a ticket for the Zoological Gardens, which will admit two. It is much better to go there on a Sunday, since it is not so crowded; beside which—and that is of consequence to a poor artist like myself—one has not got to pay for the privilege.'

'Faith,' rejoined his new acquaintance laughing, 'a very moderate entrance-fee would prove a bar to my admission, I do assure you. I have been where hard blows and plenty of them are the chief pay of the soldier, and all I have got to shew for fifteen years' service, beside this sabre-cut on my forehead, is as many pounds.'

'A soldier, eh?' mused the painter, regarding his new friend, with head aside, as though he were a work of art. 'Well, I never saw a man more cut out—I don't refer to the scar, my dear sir—for that honourable profession, in my life. But (you will excuse my ignorance, for I know nothing of politics) what enterprising nation may that have been which has been spending its money—no, you said it had no money—its blood, or at least *your* blood, for the last fifteen years in warfare?'

'I have fought for more than one nation, sir, during that period,' replied the young man simply; 'though not for six months together has my sword been sheathed.'

'Why, bless my soul, you must be Dugald Dalgetty *redivivus*,' exclaimed the painter.

'Nay, Mr Murphy,' returned the young man, slightly reddening; 'I have been no mercenary, I hope, and I have always faithfully served one mistress, Freedom.' Here he bowed his head, like a ritualist who comes upon a sacred name in his devotions, and his fine face glowed as though with the recollection of some glorious Past.

'Don Quixote in his youth,' murmured the artist beneath his breath. 'I wonder whether I could get him to sit to me in armour.'

'If you are curious to know the particular banners under which I fought,' continued Valentine Blake frankly, 'they are those of South American republics on whom imperial Brazil strove to lay her grasping hand. We were greatly overmatched, but never, never, thank Heaven, overwhelmed! Again the bearded countenance of the speaker was overspread with grateful reverence, and again it was evident that the truant thought was wandering far.

'How can a man die better than facing fearful odds, For the ashes of (other people's) fathers, and the temples of (other people's) gods,'

murmured Claude Murphy, regarding his new acquaintance with great interest.—'Mr Valentine Blake,' added he aloud, 'I honestly tell you that the motives which have actuated you in life are utterly beyond me: it is even something, let me tell you, that I give you the fullest credit for them. We in England are accustomed above all things to despise a patriot: a man—an Irishman of course it must be—who is a patriot in the cause of a foreign people is only not despised because the idea of such

a proceeding has never entered into our minds. Parricide, if you remember, was not included in Draco's criminal code: nevertheless, it was doubtless punished when it occurred. I would not advise you to be so frank with every fellow-countryman as you have been with me.'

'And yet England is a generous nation too,' replied Blake good-naturedly. 'The sympathies of her people, if not of her nobles, have ever been with the weak and down-trodden.'

'My dear sir,' observed Mr Murphy earnestly, 'I don't mind your talking to *me* in this way at all; in fact, I rather like it, for one doesn't meet an enthusiast like you—unless (you'll excuse me) of immature years, when opinions, if I may use a technical expression, are not yet "set"—more than once or twice in a lifetime. The remark you have just uttered with all sincerity would be taken by most men who chanced to hear it as mere Cant, and *would* be Cant in the mouths of ninety-nine even out of the hundred who should be audacious enough to use them. Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, and the Solidarity of the Peoples; we know the catchwords of the patriots, but they have absolutely no meaning in our ears.'

'You may thank God for it, sir,' returned the young man gravely. 'You ought to be grateful indeed that such things as I have seen done, such crimes as I have seen committed by high-handed authority upon innocent, defenceless folk, are so unknown among yourselves as to be discredited when you hear of them. May it always be so in old England.—Pray, forgive me, sir, for having troubled you with what doubtless seems to you my fanaticism. A great cause perhaps takes undue proportions in our eyes, when we have lost our liberty and shed our blood on behalf of it; but I will not offend again.'

'Offend!' rejoined the painter, his tone for the first time losing its habitual quiet. 'Nay, sir, *you* have not offended, save in that I am certain no offence was meant. You have unwittingly forced me to contrast my own life, with its selfish motives and feeble aims, with your noble and disinterested career, that's all. Well, well, it is not every one who can be a hero. Nay, it is something to have rubbed shoulders with a man who is one. May I ask, sir (not idly, I assure you), now that that occupation's gone, in what other field you propose to labour? The oyster, England, is not of course to be opened with the point of your sword.'

'That is very true,' rejoined the young man gravely; 'and therein lies my difficulty. I have some friends, however, made across the seas, whose hands reach even so far as this, and are stretched out to help me. As a teacher of Spanish and Italian, I have been already promised several pupils.'

'That is something,' answered Mr Murphy thoughtfully; 'nevertheless, it would be well to have two strings to your bow.—But here we are at the Zoological Gardens. If you are about to become a bear-leader, it is only right that you should make yourself acquainted with the habits of that animal.—You smile as confidently as though you were familiar with every wild beast under the sun; but you don't know the British Boy—carnivorous, cloven-footed, cruel, and when detected in his atrocities, full of crocodile's tears. Hark! do you recognise that fine deep bass?'

'It is the lion,' returned Valentine Blake; 'but, with all due deference to his Majesty the King of

Beasts, his voice is greatly overrated. There are many sounds in the Brazilian forest (to which, however, he is a stranger) more terrible to my ear than his gloomy menace. In the midst of the noonday hush of the woods, a long shrill scream will suddenly ring forth—God knows from what agonised throat—and then all will be still ; or, without a breath of wind stirring, a tremendous crash, as though some colossal tree had fallen, will break the enchanted silence. Nay, at night I have heard a clang, such as the ear at once associates with metal—but metal of course it cannot be—striking like some knell of doom one solemn note, the cause of which neither naturalist nor native can explain.'

' My dear Mr Blake, you make my flesh creep.'

' Well, sir, it used to make mine,' continued the young man smiling. ' That eerie sound, and the dropping of the snakes from the trees, were the only two things to which familiarity failed to breed indifference. Then, on the other hand, to recompense one for such foolish terrors, what magnificence of scenery, what lavish luxuriance of colour in leaf and blossom, in bird and insect ! How often have I longed to possess the power of depicting what I saw ; but I am but a humble disciple of your charming art, and the very magnitude of the opportunity seemed to paralyse my fingers.'

' You did make sketches, then, did you ?' asked Mr Murphy eagerly. ' Ah, you must let me look at them. I will enlarge them, sir ; I will transfer them to canvas twenty feet wide, and a mile long. We will set up a Panorama of the Forest of the Amazons. You shall describe the scenery in your own eloquent manner and in characteristic costume—you have got the hat already. I will do my best, in an adjoining apartment, to imitate, with a stick and a kettle, the metallic sound that agitates the stillness of the primeval forest.—Are there any wild-cats in that locality, may I ask ?'

' Indeed, there are,' answered the young man, laughing heartily.

' Then Selina shall have a part in the performance,' continued the painter. ' I allude to Mrs Murphy, sir, whose acquaintance I must trespass on your friendship before long, to make. I have also an only son, who, although I say it who shouldn't say it, I believe to be the most complete and perfect failure that ever disappointed a father. From one side at least the boy might have been expected to inherit some little talent, but he has done nothing of the sort. People have their wicked doubts about Original Sin, but all that is original about Claude Woodford is his peccadilloes, which are of a quite different sort to mine. Forgive, however, the garrulous doting of a husband and a father.—Here is the lion.—How do you do, Sandy ? Fetch the chalks.' This last remark was not an indignity offered to the king of beasts, but a salutation addressed to his keeper.—' That good man,' continued the painter, in explanation, ' is so civil as to keep some drawing materials for me at his cottage yonder—my minister with a portfolio, as I call him. There will be a crowd here at feeding-time, for nothing your Londoners like better, next to insulting the flamingo with their scraps of bread, than seeing the carnivora growl over raw flesh. *Panem et circenses*—it's the same story as in old Rome, sir ; our civilisation, after all, is only broadcloth deep. Scratch a Cockney, and— That's weel, Sandy, man. Hae

ye ony snuff about ye ? Eh, but that's a fine pictur on the box-lid ! Ye maun gie me the len o't, Saurers, just to copy it.—(Scratch a Scotchman, and he'll thank you for it, Mr Blake.)—I'll tak guid care o't; fearna ye.'

' Then you come here to sketch the lions !' observed Valentine Blake with surprise. ' I did not know you were an animal painter ; that is—I—' Here the young man hesitated, and looked considerably confused.

' Thought I was a vegetable painter, did you ?' returned Mr Murphy gravely. ' Heads of cauliflowers, eh ? Much admired for the tint of his beet-roots ! unapproachable for the delicacy of his parsnips ! Thank you ; no, sir ; and let me tell you, I have a soul even beyond lions—not, of course, as respects personal courage, that is *your* line—but with regard to Art. You see before you one of the most assiduous disciples of the severe and Classical School. My natural bent is, I confess, for depicting the influences of the softer passion ; but the fact is, Selina won't stand it. The difficulty I have in getting female models plain enough to secure that woman's approbation would astonish you. "Am not I," she asks, "a suitable model for any respectable artist ?" And so she would be, if I had a fancy for painting Xantippe. It's the most embarrassing position you can conceive, my dear sir. When the idea of depicting this noble animal first struck me, I thought of a classical representation of *Una and the Lion*; an old subject, it is true, yet one which requires a youthful female to sit for it. But no sooner did I shew Clementina a sketch of what I proposed to work out, than she was up in arms at once. "Spenser !" cried she, "what Spenser ? Why, the creature has not a rag of clothing on, so far as I can see."

" What ! the lion, ma'am ?" said I, pretending to misunderstand her.

" No, sir, the minx," retorted she ; " and you ought to be ashamed of yourself for entertaining such an idea !"

" So I had to give up Una, and take to Androclus. You have read of him, Mr Blake, without doubt in Aulus Gellius ?"

" I never read Aulus Gellius," returned Valentine with simplicity.

" You're an honest fellow," replied the other laughing ; " and to be frank with you, I have not read him either. But I believe he was the agreeable rattle who first invented that charming fable about the slave who was spared by a lion in the circus, in return for his having extracted a thorn from that magnanimous animal's paw. A very good after-dinner story, but scarcely credible even with dates (I suppose they *had* dates after dinner), and the real name—Androclus.—Now, my dear Mr Blake," continued Mr Murphy gravely, " I daresay you think I am a gasconading fellow myself, with no meaning in my talk whatever ; but the fact is, I determined to bring you to this very spot from the first moment I set eyes on you. I want you to be my model—my Androclus. I am not a rich man, far from it, but— Now, don't be offended, my dear sir, pray, don't ; it's merely a matter of business—"

" It is quite impossible, *quite*," interrupted Valentine Blake with good-natured firmness, " that I should ever receive a sixpence for the small service at which you hint ; but if, on the other hand, I can put myself into any attitude short of standing on

my head, by which you may gain an idea for your Androclus, these poor limbs are at your disposal.'

'Thank you much, very much,' replied the painter cordially; 'but nothing of that sort is at all requisite. I have had half-a-dozen stalwart fellows sitting to me already for this subject, and as far as thews and limbs go, I have sketched in my man; nay, so far as pluck goes, many of them look as though they would as soon stare a lion out of countenance as a man (and some of them sooner, if he was a policeman); but that is all the expression they have. Now, what I want is some touch of tenderness to mate with the intrepidity; and you must forgive me, Mr Blake, for saying that I have seen it for the first time in you. When you floored the beadle, I said to myself: "That is the man for my lion;" but when you spoke to the child, I read in your kind face that you were also the man to have taken out my lion's thorn.'

CHAPTER XX.—XANTIPPE.

In the streets of London which are shop-streets there is always variety, since no quarter of the metropolis (except perhaps Grosvenor Street, which ought to be called Doctor's Acre) is devoted to particular trades; and again, in most of the new districts, our dwelling-houses, although they may be lath and plaster of the same thinness within, afford without some very striking architectural contrasts, Gothic and Doric, Italian and Byzantine; but in the once fashionable regions about Russell Square, every street is a counterpart of its neighbour, and not a house ventures to exhibit in front even so much originality as may be expressed by throwing out a bow-window. Behind them, however, they freely indulge in this anomaly, while one or two put forth (giving their back-view a great resemblance to a snail with his head out of his shell) a single long low room, with a skylight cut in the top of it. When the house is in a square, this external apartment is generally a billiard-room; but in dwellings of less pretension, it is almost invariably an artist's studio. The ground-floor lodgings which Mr Claude Murphy had occupied as a bachelor in Rhadegund Street, Russell Square, were provided with this excrescence, a circumstance which had mainly induced that pleasure-loving gentleman to settle in so sombre a locality; and when he married, he retained the same abode, except that he took the whole house instead of a portion of it.

It still, however, bore the unmistakable appearance of having been let in lodgings. Most of the sofas were horse-hair; no less than three of the chimney-pieces were furnished with circular mirrors, of great convexity, sustained by chains in the beaks of retrieving eagles; the chairs were neither numerous nor select, and, gaping at the joints of their wood-work, nipped the unwary visitor with a sharpness that overbore all the restraints of etiquette, and compelled him to announce himself of flesh and blood; and the glass fronts of the bookcases were shuttered with faded silk, for the convenience of lodgers who should prefer to keep their marmalade and pickles within easy reach, and yet not sacrifice any reputation they might enjoy of being patrons of literature. The house was so dull and dark that it was impossible to tell how dirty it was; but it was quite unnecessary for any enemy of Mrs Murphy, if such a one existed, to shake the dust off his shoes after

calling in Rhadegund Street, for it was absolutely necessary that he should shake it off his hat. A single servant, with an occasional charwoman, formed her entire establishment; and besides, the lady of the house was of opinion that brushing things, and especially washing them, wore them out.

Mrs Murphy herself has grown very thin and faded since we saw her last, although neither from brushing nor washing; her very lips are thinner than they were, perhaps from long habit of pressing them together, like a lemon-squeezer, after her bitter words: the metaphor of the rosebud, usually applied to female lips, is more adapted to Mrs Murphy's nose, which has grown uncommonly sharp and red; but the lily, so far at least as the yellow portion of it is concerned, vies in vain with her bony cheek. But although Mrs Murphy's appearance betokens a hard bout with Time, and affords such proofs of his well-known and unavoidable 'facers,' let it not be imagined that it gives any sign of giving in; upon the contrary, she is more indomitable-looking than ever. Her eyes, always hard and slow of movement, seem now to be fixed on some object, which, though far off, she is certain to attain to sooner or later, if only she never loses sight of it—and she never does, not even in her dreams. Nobody sees it but herself; nobody knows she sees it; but if her husband had taken the same interest in her face as he does in every other face he meets, he would have noticed that the look I speak of first came into it seventeen years ago, when Ernest Woodford wrote to tell her that a son and heir was born to him, and delicately expressed a hope in the postscript, that her own sweet temper and personal charms might be found by her husband to be a sufficient compensation for any pecuniary disappointment that the intelligence might cause him.

Secretive and self-involved, however, as Mrs Murphy might be upon one subject, she was always ready with 'a piece of her mind' upon other matters—such as Mr Murphy's extravagant habits, his late hours, and (as has been already hinted) his female models. Another pair of eyes beside those of the artist passed judgment upon all in petticoats who sought admittance to his studio as professional sitters; and if they were not up to her standard, that is, if they did not possess the requirements insisted upon by pre-Raphaelite painters, namely, plainness of feature and angularity of outline, she took up her knitting, and prepared to make a third in the sky-lighted room. When the model refused to sit under such circumstances, as she generally did, Mrs Murphy was malignantly triumphant over 'the baggage,' and when she consented, Mrs Murphy watched her 'play of feature,' knitting-needle in hand, as though it were a poisoned dart. When Claude, with characteristic politeness, suggested any change of attitude, Mrs Murphy would mutter: 'Very pretty,' but by no means as a eulogistic remark; and when he murmured: 'More to the light, if you please, madam;' she would exclaim to herself (but yet so as the model should hear it): 'Well, upon my word!'

So, as Claude had no talent for the Terrible, and was not allowed to paint in peace unless the subject was a Fury or a Gorgon, he had taken to the Heroic in despair. Even in that, he had found obstacles; not only had his *Una and the Lion* met with domestic disapprobation, but

'None of your Joans of Arc or Maids of Saragossa for me,' had been his wife's verdict upon the very first mention of those historical personages. Nay, Androclus himself had met with obstacles. Mrs Murphy could not be jealous of the gentlemen of thews and muscles who presented themselves at her hall-door on their way to the temple of art, since their stature forbade the notion of their being females in disguise; but she 'gave it them so exceedingly hot' (to use their own classical expression) about not wiping their gigantic shoes, and looked after them so uncommonly sharp at their departure, lest they should carry off the hall-table and umbrella-stand, that more than one of them had refused to sit for the dauntless Slave a second time. Modesty, of course, forbade Mrs Murphy's favouring them with her company in the studio, but she was always hovering in the passage, ready to cut off any supplies, in the shape of pots of porter, with which Claude would have fain treated his muscular friends. This domestic police-duty, which she had originally performed in person, had of late years been deputed to her son, Claude Woodford, a pasty-faced young gentleman, by this time nearly eighteen years of age, but very undersized and childish-looking. This individual would lurk about the stairs, hanging his hydrocephalaean head over the banisters, and expectorating upon the oil-cloth below, until he heard his father's door cautiously opened; then he would slink up to the back drawing-room and whisper: 'Ma, they're a-sending out for beer,' when his lady-mother would descend with promptitude, and lay an embargo on the proposed import.

Mrs Murphy was just the sort of woman to live in her back drawing-room (the front apartment she rarely entered, except to perform in a sort of sacerdotal costume the solemn office of dusting the ornaments with a bunch of feathers), and she always sat with her door open, not for air, for she was as cold as a dropping-well, but for purposes of auscultation and espial. This, however, was only necessary during the hours when her offspring was not at his day-school, for, as she was wont to boast, her 'Woody' was both eye and ear to her. Selina Murphy was honestly devoted to her son. She had welcomed his advent as only unexpected blessings *are* welcomed; she had regarded him in his infancy, not only with maternal pride, but with the reverence due to the heir of the great Woodford estate; and when he was deprived of it by the birth of his cousin Bentinck, she clung all the more to her disinherited ill-used boy, whose disposition (as she justly remarked) nobody knew how to appreciate except herself. He had not been happy at the three or four schools to which he had been sent, both masters and boys having entered into an unnatural league against him. His own father was quite unable to estimate those practical and solid virtues—prudence, economy, and reticence—by which the poor lad was distinguished; and the maid-of-all-work and the charwoman hated him with all the intensity of which their vulgar natures were capable. But all this only drew 'her Woody' nearer to his mother's heart. He did not reciprocate her affection, because he had not the commodity within him; but he stuck to her closely, as to a blank wall that shields one from the wind and rain, and which we are prepared to leave without scruple, or a scrap of grateful remembrance, should the sun come forth, and shelter be no longer necessary. He was not at all afraid of

her, for he well knew his power—accepting the fact greedily enough, without troubling himself about the cause—but his behaviour towards her was cringing and submissive, as it was with all from whom he had aught to gain; yet this specious regard—such as the policeman entertains for the cook—was accepted by his mother as filial love, and his officious servility set down as prompt obedience. If his father had not been too indolent to assert himself, Woody would have joined him against 'ma' with equal readiness, for it was one of his practical virtues to lean always to the strongest side; but the time had gone by for even a show of fight upon Claude's part. More than once, the poor fellow had thought to himself: 'I will stand this no longer, but prime myself with a couple of bottles of champagne, and come home and larrup her with the mahl-stick.' But whether he could not get credit for so much good liquor, or that the vintage was not sufficiently powerful for the purpose, he never put this design into execution. His subjection was as established and complete as a wife could wish. She had endeavoured, it is true, and failed, to put his indoor pipe out; but the exception only proved her supreme rule—a despotism mitigated by tobacco. She did not even allow him a latch-key.

'Who is that your father's bringing in with him, Woody?' inquired she sharply of her offspring upon the same Sunday afternoon on which we accompanied Claude Murphy and Valentine Blake to the Zoological Gardens. 'I am sure I heard a strange voice in the hall.'

The obedient youth rushed to the banisters, to make his reconnaissance, but returned at once, like an outpost driven in by the enemy in force. 'They're both a-coming up-stairs, ma. It ain't a model, nor anything like it: it's a swell.'

Master Woodford's remark was not intended as a satire upon the Upper Ten Thousand. The only two classes who came to visit his father now—for his artist-friends preferred to see him at their own homes—were professional sitters and patrons—persons who came to buy; and to these last, Selina, when she happened to come across them, was always civil; first, because she had an admirable perception, inherited, as we have seen, by 'Woody,' of the side upon which her bread was buttered; and secondly, because, if her nature admitted of a weakness, it was for the aristocracy of her native land. If a 'model'—even a masculine one—had ventured to cross her threshold upon a Sunday, she would have sent him out again, to use her own vivid language, with a flea in his ear; but a gentleman with money in his pocket was welcome any day. What was Sabbath-breaking in the former class, was 'eccentricity' in the latter; and many of Claude's patrons *were* eccentric; some of them, too, wore mighty beards, were careless of their costume, and as often as not had the appearance of being foreigners. She had never before seen so distinguished-looking a gentleman as he whom her husband now introduced her to as Mr Valentine Blake. It was not Claude's custom to bring his patrons up to the drawing-room floor at all. They went straight into the studio, made a telescope of their fingers, and concluded their business arrangements over their cigars, while their Hansoms waited without a cost that made Mrs Murphy quite uncomfortable to think about. She was therefore agreeably surprised by the present visit, and more than ordinarily gracious. Perhaps there was enough

of the woman left about her still to be moved by the stranger's handsome looks.

She rose, and offered him her hand, which he carried to his lips with a grace that greatly impressed her, and while she uttered some compliances about the weather, regarded her with such a wistful look as she could not but construe as a proof of respectful admiration.

'It's about Androclus, my dear,' began the painter hurriedly. 'When I tell you what this gentleman proposes, I am sure you will agree with me that we are under great obligations—'

'It needs no explanation,' interposed his wife with a queen-like motion of her skinny arm: 'I have already read not only a Taste for the fine arts, but munificence in the encouragement of them, in Mr Blake's expressive countenance. Mr Murphy is such a child in matters of business, that it is quite a relief to me to find him in honourable hands. The picture-dealers rob him, poor fellow, right and left; often, indeed, scarcely remunerate us for our outgoings. They, of course, do not take into consideration the—'

'Genius,' suggested Mr Murphy.

'The enormous sums we expend upon models,' continued the irrepressible lady—'a dissolute and abandoned class of persons.—You may smile, sir; but you might have thought our house, any time during the last three months, to have been a House of Call for Giants, such a number of hulking fellows, each one worse than the last, has my husband employed to represent the character upon which he is at present engaged. The result obtained from that shockingly raw material you are right to admire: it is by very far the best of Mr Murphy's classical impersonations—'

'My good woman, it hasn't got a face,' interposed Claude with desperation. 'Androclus is at present headless. This gentleman, upon whose countenance you have already expressed so favourable a verdict, has most generously offered me a study of his features.'

'He's nothing but a Model,' whispered Woodford in his mother's ear; 'I have been into the hall, and seen his hat.'

'I will have no models here upon a Sunday,' observed Mrs Murphy, folding her hands, as though that was the only operation to be done with propriety: 'you know my rule, Mr Murphy, very well.'

'I do indeed, madam,' answered her husband drily; 'but you do not seem to understand that this gentleman's services are gratuitous. He is a soldier of fortune, who, having no further occasion to draw his sword, is now engaged in tuition; but having still some leisure on his hands, and fancying himself under some obligation to me for a trifling service which I have been fortunate enough to render him this morning, he has made the generous proposal I have mentioned. I had come up hither, madam, to put you in possession of the circumstances, in order that he may be treated in this house with gratitude and respect.'

There was something in Claude's tone so unusually severe and decisive, that of itself it may well have caused so judicious a lady as his wife to waive further objection, at all events for the present; but, whatever moved her, Mrs Murphy's voice sank to a more moderate pitch, as she replied: 'Of course, Claude, if the offer is gratuitous, I have nothing more to say. What I set myself against is anything in the shape of business on the Sabbath—such as buying and selling. There is no more harm

in your painting this gentleman's face—gratuitously, that is—than in looking at it.—May I ask, Mr Blake, whether you are a private tutor, or an usher in a school?'

Valentine Blake had listened to all that had hitherto passed between his host and hostess with an imperturbable countenance; but a slight flush now came upon his cheeks, and his features, to observing eyes, might have been seen to harden. Claude Murphy, however, was too much engrossed in wiping his face, upon which the perspiration had broken out during the recent unwonted war of words; and Selina was gazing straight before her with that preoccupied look in her eyes more manifest than usual. It was only sharp Master Woodford who noticed that the stranger 'didn't like it,' when his mother had thus addressed him.

'Madam,' replied the latter gravely, 'I have no friends in England, nor a single relative who bears my name, and I am very far from being rich. There is therefore small chance of my having a choice in my profession. I have at present, however, the promise of a few private pupils.'

'Do you know the rudiments of a commercial education, Mr Blake?' continued Selina thoughtfully.

'Yes, madam. I have had occasion to learn something of most trades, and book-keeping among the rest.'

Mrs Murphy spoke no more; and the two men soon betook themselves to the studio.

'By Jove!' cried Claude, as soon as its sacred walls enclosed them, 'if Mrs Murphy wants to get you cheap as a tutor for her "Woody," now just take my advice, and say "No."'

'Thank you, my friend,' returned Valentine smiling: 'forewarned is forearmed.'

But Mr Murphy might have spared his advice, for it was not of her beloved offspring that Selina was thinking for this once. 'A soldier,' she murmured to herself—while Woody watched her furtively, trying in vain to guess what the old lady was driving after now—'a soldier, and therefore bold; poor, too, and friendless and unknown. I am much mistaken if I have not found the very man for my purpose, within the first twelve hours that I have been looking for him.'

MOORISH AND TOLEDO SWORDS.

SPAIN is a country in decay, misgoverned, oppressed, benighted; yet it is impossible not to entertain hopes of a people so affectionate, so honest, and so inspired with admiration for the heroic past as they undoubtedly are. They forget the miserable princes and military adventurers by whom their country has been trampled down and ruined for several centuries, and revert to the period when all that was martial and noble in their character was brought out by conflict with the Moor. In the *armoria* at Madrid, you discover, at every glance, illustrations of Spanish history in its terrible approximations with the East. When the Moors were in the zenith of their civilisation, the type of their prowess was the Damascus sword, the brightest, the keenest, the most resistless ever wielded by man. Respecting the arts by which it was produced, there exists much variety of opinion. Some think it owes its fame to the native superiority of the steel, others to the hardening qualities of the Syrian waters, others to the excellence of the workmanship; while that opinion, perhaps, approaches

nearest to the truth which attributes its admirable qualities to the union of all three causes. Many persons seem to entertain the notion that the characteristic ornament of the Damascus blade, called damaskeening, is the inlaying of the steel with gold and silver. But this is an error. It is quite true that the manufacturers of Damascus do inlay swords with the precious metals, and that they display admirable skill and taste in this species of ornamentation ; but this is called inlaying. Damaskeening is a totally different process, and consists in producing, upon the polished surface of the metal, a series of waves and clouds, radiations suggesting ideas of the firmament when touched by the colours of the morning. To gaze upon a blade thus beautified is like looking upon the surface of a polished gem in which Nature herself has wrought her delicate miracles. It is partly, perhaps, from this pleasure that the orientals set so much value on the Damascus blade, upon which they gaze as upon a picture ; and, indeed, when placed upon the golden sand in the dazzling sunlight of the Nejd or the Sahara, its azure splendour appears almost like a landscape in itself.

On some of the old swords taken at Lepanto, in the Morea, in Syria or in Africa, you behold, engraved on the brilliant metal, a sentence from the Koran, the profession of faith, or one of the ninety-nine names of God, in the midst of rich and exquisite flourishes, harmonising perfectly with the truly picturesque characters of the Arabic alphabet. The Hebrew experienced strong emotions when he heard the songs of Sion sung in a strange land ; but his feelings were perhaps less deep and powerful than those of the child of the desert when he beholds in the far West, in his own noble language, ‘There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God.’ These words, sacred and sonorous, he murmurs over to himself, and as he does so, he seems, by the power of association, to hear the rustle of palm-trees in the breeze, or the voice of the Muezzin calling him to prayer from the lofty minaret.

On inlaid plates of gold or silver in the stocks of old Lepanto muskets you find similar inscriptions, and even on helmets which defended in years gone by the heads of eastern warriors. Weapons fabricated in Italy designate their own birthplace by bubbling up of pagan sentiment and taste through the upper crust of medieval superstitions—such, for example, as the fight between the Laphithæ and the Centaurs. A lady who stood by while we were admiring one of these steel *bassi rilievi*, pointing to a fallen Laphith, exclaimed : ‘Ah, look at that Moor !’ The imagination of the Spaniards of the present day seldom goes back beyond the period of their wars with the Africans, which is their heroic or golden age. What Hastings is to men of Norman race, that is Lepanto to the Goths of the Peninsula. On that watery field, their ancestors checked the westward progress of the Muslims, and heaped up those shining trophies of victory, which still make the hearts of their descendants swell with pride as they behold them. It was a grand day that of Lepanto. The book which proclaims the unity of God, which had elevated and purified so large a portion of the East, was bearing its revelation towards the Pillars of Hercules, when its course was cut short by the sword of Christendom. Floods of oriental spoils were then spread over Europe, more especially over Spain, where we behold them still glittering in orient splendour amid the ruder

productions of the West. But that splendour is not the splendour they displayed at Lepanto : the diamonds, the rubies, the opals, the chaledonies, which then clustered round hilt and pommel have been removed, and had their places supplied with bits of coloured glass. Still the effect is fine as you contemplate them in their glass frames, and call to mind as you do so that those handles of twisted gold wire were once grasped by the hand of calif or emir, fighting for what he believed to be the cause of God.

There is no inconsiderable analogy between the taste of the old Spaniards and that of the orientals. Among both prevailed the worship of the sword, a worship real, practical, springing from the heart, which it filled with energy. Hence the skill, the labour, the costliness with which the favourite instrument of death was adorned. Every part which offered a clear space to the tool of the graver was covered in one case with the figures of saints, or with those of Jesus and his mother ; in the other, with Arabic characters representing the name of God. In both, the inspiration sprang from the same source—the wish to interest Heaven in the cause for which the weapon was wielded ; generally a sacred one, since it was that of country, of freedom, of independence. The guard of the sword is often beautifully ornamented either with figures in filigree, in gold enamel, or with golden effigies on a black ground. This last especially has a magnificent effect, since it imparts a depth and gravity to the ornaments, which remind you that they belong to the bier and to the sepulchre. History seems to start into life as you gaze on that long procession of weapons, which brings you down from the ninth century to the present day, over epochs replete with disaster, defeat, or with victory and glory. All the cherished names of Spain, all that flourish in chronicle, ballad, or romance, stand forth in grand relief before you, as your eye sweeps along the immense suite of brilliantly lighted apartments which have been appropriated to this matchless collection of arms. Old, almost forgotten, kings and heroes, as Ferdinand the Saint, Boabdil the Moor, Bernardo del Carpio, the Cid, and many other half-mythical personages, challenge a place among living men, when you look upon their swords, their helmets, or their coats of mail. No doubt, the interest of the view increases as you emerge from the shadows of tradition, and stand in the full blaze of historical light, with Ferdinand and Isabella, with Columbus, with Charles V., with Philip II., with Don John of Austria—names which acquire fresh lustre from their association with our English annals. Beside these, the eye encounters frequent mementoes of Cortes and Pizarro, which immediately hurry away your fancy to the Cordillera of the Andes, to Quito, to Cuzco, and to the gold and jewels of Mexico and Peru.

One of the swords of Philip II., though of German workmanship, is admitted to be one of the finest in the collection : pommel, handle, crossbar, and guard are richly ornamented, some with embossed figures in silver ; others, as those on the crossbar, in *intaglio*. It may almost be said that there is a literature of arms, consisting of inscriptions, mottoes, names, dates, and other memorials connected with historical personages. On Philip’s sword, we find, as might have been expected, indications of bigotry, despotism, and superstition, couched in the concise language which

is best adapted for the purpose. Each side of the blade is emblazoned with that fanaticism which led sometimes to *autos da fé*, sometimes to massacres in the street, sometimes to carnage on the battlefield : *pro fide et patria, pro Christo et patria, inter arma silent leges, soli deo gloria*. Turning round the sword, we read : *pugna pro patria; pro aria et focus; nec temere, nec timide; fide sed cui vide*.

Such was the Philip of history, the cold, gloomy, sanguinary bigot who married one English princess while in love with another ; who afterwards married his son's betrothed, next killed that son, together with the woman he had chosen ; who drenched the Netherlands with blood ; who exhausted the resources of his empire in the attempt to crush England ; and who at last died a despised and mumbling devotee, lamented by no one. In the gallery of Madrid, we may read his character in his portrait—the heavy sullen brow, the sunken eyes, the coarse nose, the thick projecting lips, the forward chin, and hollow cheeks, with an expression over the whole of half-insane ferocity. Yet in whatever else he may have wanted it, he had good taste in weapons ; and there is one blade in the armoury which he had purchased but never mounted, which was believed in his time to be worth a whole city. Near the above sword of Philip II., there is another still more beautiful, belonging to an owner whose name is unknown. The merit of the workmanship is divided between Spain and Italy, the blade having been wrought by Sebastian Hernandez at Toledo, the hilt by some nameless artist at the southern foot of the Alps. The date of its production must be that of the most brilliant period of the Renaissance, when Northern Italy was brimful of poetry and genius of every kind. This hilt is a little epic in itself, partly serious, partly comic, with its busts of dignified men and lovely women, its masks, its satyrs, its genii, interspersed with luxuriant scrolls, which wind richly round a medallion representing the Judgment of Paris. The Phrygian shepherd is seated on a rock, with a golden apple in his hand, and the three goddesses, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite standing undressed before him. The moment of doubt has passed, and he is extending his right hand to present the palm of beauty to the mother of Eros. In this composition, which, for design and workmanship, has never perhaps been surpassed, we behold the crowning production of the *armeria*.

By the term Moorish, the Spaniards designate everything eastern, everything produced by the professors of the Muslim faith, whether they flourished in Spain, in Africa, or in Asia. To this class of weapons belongs the great Persian sword taken at Lepanto, with the figure of a lion on the blade, beside an inscription in illegible characters. The difficulty lying in the way of interpreting them is, however, much more owing to the industry of the keepers of the *armeria*, than to the style in which they were originally engraved, since, by perpetual cleaning, they have been nearly worn out. As the reader knows, all representations of men or animals were forbidden by the Prophet of Mecca, because in his day they suggested too close a connection with idolatry. As the necessity for the prohibition vanished, figures of living creatures gradually made their appearance in Mohammedan works of art, especially in Persia, Granada, and Andalusia. Accordingly, on the sword above described we find the figure of a lion rudely engraved, which may possibly have been the mark of the

Persian artist ; just as a little dog, a Moor's head, or a she-wolf was the mark by which the artists of Zaragoza distinguished their productions.

The renowned manufactory of Toledo, which gave their celebrity to Spanish blades, is said to have been established as far back as the ninth century by the Moors, to whom, in fact, Spanish civilisation, if such it may be called, owes its origin. In later times, the *Fabrica de las Armas* was suddenly closed, upon which the artists dispersed themselves, and set up fabrics in different parts of Spain and Portugal—at Lisbon, Orgaz, Seville, Zaragoza, Bilbao, and other places. In our old literature, we meet with frequent allusions to Spanish swords, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

In the mountains of Aragon, near Calatayud, and in those of Guipuzcoa, near Mondragon, is found the best iron in Spain, perhaps in Europe. Over these mines flow several streams of icy coldness, a fact which suggested to the native miners the idea that the iron itself was frozen, and hence weapons made of this metal were said to be of the ice-brook's temper. Shakspere, whose reading was extensive and various, and whose genius enabled him to turn all he read to account, puts into the mouth of Othello, in one of the most striking scenes to be found in his plays, an allusion to one of the streams of Guipuzcoa. Devoured by remorse, his nerves quivering with horror at the murder he has just committed, he is disarmed in a moment of surprise by Montano ; but soon recovering his presence of mind, he exclaims to the Venetians who were pressing forward to seize him :

I have another weapon in this chamber ;
It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper.
..... Behold ! I have a weapon :
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh : I have seen the day
That with this little arm, and this good sword,
I have made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your stop.

Again, where Falstaff is describing to Master Brook the adventure of the buck-basket, he says that Ford's people stuffed him into it like a good bilbao into a peck, hilt to point, heels to head ; alluding to the practice of exporters of Spanish swords, who rolled them up like a piece of tape into a circle, and then put them into a round box. When, however, they were taken out, such were the force and flexibility of the steel, they recovered their straight shape in an instant.

When the blood of Spain ran high, and abolition could be cheaply obtained, the dagger or stiletto played an important part in the social economy of the country. To go without a dagger was far worse than to go without under-linen. Accordingly, every man wore his favourite little weapon at his belt or in his sleeve, every woman in her garter, so that infidelity in love, or even the slightest affront, was often revenged by stabbing. It was not uncommon—we mean in former days—for the women of the *Puerto del Sol*, the class analogous to our Billingsgate ladies, to draw their daggers on each other, and tinge the steps of the *Fuente Nacional* with blood. The manufacture of stilettoes was, in consequence, a profitable branch of industry, by which many amassed large fortunes, and acquired a wide-spread reputation. Among others, Ramon de Joces rose to be equal in renown with the most famous artists of Toledo or Zaragoza—to possess a poniard of his manufacture

was almost equal to inheriting a patent of nobility—so pleasant was it for a gentleman to feel its polished point between his ribs.

Respecting the means by which the steel, whether of sword or dagger, was properly tempered, various opinions have been entertained. Lord Bacon, who thought that mankind before his time had only one eye, was fully persuaded that hardening iron or steel was a modern invention, though it was in truth known as early as the Trojan war; and at Toledo, when swords began to be manufactured, they were likewise tempered in the Tagus. By degrees, new methods of hardening were invented. Some artists, after whirling about the heated blade in the air, plunged it into a tub of melted grease or oil, then into another tub of warm water, afterwards into the cold river or into a tank. The flexibility of the blade was by many supposed to be increased by introducing a narrow strip of fine iron down the middle of the blade, while others thought, and, in our opinion, rightly, that the weapon was thus deteriorated. Steel of the best quality can, in thin lamine, be twisted round your finger like a ribbon. Thus, the mainspring of a watch, when curled up in a circular space, resembles a strip of silk; but the force of the metal always tending towards a right line, struggled against the compression produced by the screw, and that with an effort so equable that we measure time by it. Our readers are doubtless aware that for ages Italy strove to rival Spain in the production of arms; but though the genius of her artists was perhaps greater, the material with which they wrought was so inferior, that their works never equalled in excellence those of the Spanish manufacturers. For this reason, many Italians emigrated to Spain, especially to Zaragoza, where one of them at least, Andrea Ferrara, made himself so great a reputation that his name became synonymous throughout Europe with a Spanish sword.

MARRIED WELL.

IN NINETEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER XIII.—GEORGE EWART'S 'LITTLE SPEECH.'
At the Grimshaws' dinner, as Nelly was much occupied making various messes for the hypochondriac, and the Echo merely repeated the last word or few words of the others' remarks, with different inflections of voice, expressive of different emotions, the conversation proper was almost entirely confined to old Grimshaw and Ewart.

'You've been ordained, I believe, Mr Ewart,' said the former, 'since I saw you last?'

'Yes; I was ordained last Easter.'

'Ah! so Miss Finch told me, I think: you've met her once or twice since at the Platts' and elsewhere?'

'Such has been my good-fortune.'

'It's a poor look-out, the church, unless you have patronage; perhaps you have.'

'I bought a living some time since—soon after my aunt's death. I then came into a considerable sum of money, which, of course, I couldn't have immediately; but her lawyers were mine, and my very good friends, and they managed to make a very good bargain for me, advancing the purchase-money for me.'

'Ah! that makes a great difference; but you may have to wait for years before you step into the present holder's shoes.'

'Well, I must take my chance,' said Ewart, shrugging his shoulders; 'meanwhile, I am a poor curate with eighty pounds a year, and a pretty house in a lovely country, for which I must set out in a week or ten days.'

'How will you like that?' asked old Grimshaw gloomily. 'Eighty pounds a year might keep a horse and a half, but will not keep a man.'

'Oh,' replied Ewart smiling, 'I was not fool enough to spend all my money on the living; I kept some for the rainy days of a curate's life; and if I should have to wait longer than I have calculated, something will turn up, I daresay.'

'Bad shillings turn up very often,' growled old Grimshaw, 'but I don't think much else does.'

Nelly, during her occupation, heard all this talk, and somehow, Ewart's worldly, careless tone jarred upon her feelings. She would have liked to hear him say something about the sanctity of his office being enough to reconcile him to long years of poverty; but perhaps he was right; perhaps he knew old Grimshaw's character, and was aware that the hypochondriac would regard such professions as affection and hypocrisy. Nevertheless, she sighed a little sigh; but it went unnoticed into the region where silent protest, and unavailing tear, and reproachful look are treasured up to bear witness for some, and against others.

It was once more June: it was a little more than a year since the fatal fire; and as yet George Ewart had not made his 'little speech.' The weather was hot, and old Grimshaw, having discussed with Ewart over their wine the remarkable case of 'rheumatism in the heel,' had put his handkerchief over his head, and succumbed to sleep. His snores gave Ewart leave of absence; and he accordingly adjourned to the drawing-room. There the Echo, as if she had mysterious connection with the room below, and thus divined the part she had to play, lay 'like a warrior taking his rest,' with an antimacassar around her, and faithfully reflected the stertorous condition of her slumbering lord and master. Nelly sat by an open window which looked upon the trim little garden; such honeysuckle as they have in the suburbs (and it is wonderfully like the real thing) shed delicate odours about her; her dainty fingers were swiftly moving in the mechanical work of crochet; and her eyes wore the expression of one whose soul is wandering in the mazes of dreamland. As Ewart entered, she started slightly, smiled archly, and lifting a forefinger which Eos might have envied, pointed in the direction of the recumbent Echo. Ewart moved noiselessly towards Nelly, and in half-whispers proposed a few turns in the garden. Nelly assented easily; and the two passed quietly through the tiny conservatory and down the steps into the garden. As they paced up and down, the conversation at first was about matters of indifference: at last Ewart gave symptoms of that sort of restlessness which leads to reckless plucking of flowers, and aimless scattering of the leaves.

'Pray, do not destroy all Mrs Grimshaw's roses,' said Nelly demurely, 'or I shall get such a scolding.'

'Let us sit down in the arbour, then,' rejoined Ewart, 'and I shall be out of temptation—from the flowers.'

'Hadn't we better go indoors again? Mrs Grimshaw may be awake; and she will be so angry if I am not there to make tea.'

'No, do sit here for a few minutes. Pray, take this chair.—Thank you; it is very kind of you to

humour me; and as for Mrs Grimshaw's anger, why—Excuse me, Miss Finch; I have known you a long while!—

'More than a year certainly,' interrupted Nelly a little ironically.

'Well, it may not seem long, looking at it in that way, but then I was so often at my aunt's, and that makes a great difference.'

'Oh, certainly, it makes a difference,' assented Nelly. 'We will consider, if you like, that you have known me for a century; what then?'

'I—I—was going to—to venture,' said Ewart uneasily, 'to ask you whether you are happy here?'

'How very kind you are!' exclaimed Nelly with a laugh. 'And suppose I say I am very unhappy—that they treat me shockingly—that Mrs Grimshaw beats me, and that the servants are rude to me—will you use your interest, sir' (as she rose and made him a courtesy), 'to get me another situation?' and Nelly reseated herself with the brightest of smiles.

'If you would only be serious,' said Ewart, drawing his chair closer to hers, 'I could tell you of a situation in the parish where my curacy is.'

'Pew-opener?' asked Nelly mischievously, but a close observer might have seen by the movements of her hands that a little of Ewart's uneasiness had been communicated to her.

'It is a situation,' Ewart continued earnestly, 'which is, I know, quite unworthy of you, but which—'

'It can't be beadle, of course,' broke in Nelly with a reflective air. 'Is it schoolmistress?'

'Miss Finch,' said Ewart with a smile, suddenly taking Nelly's right hand in both his hands, 'it is no jesting matter. You cannot mistake me now. Believe me, I have loved you long, and the situation is that of the curate's wife. Will you take it?'

There was a moment's pause whilst Nelly bent her head over Ewart's hands; then she lifted up her lovely face, glistening with her tears, and beaming with countless smiles, leaned forward, looked him steadfastly in the eyes, and murmured: 'Yes, darling, with pleasure;' whereupon the compact was sealed, if not signed; the two high contracting parties returned to the drawing-room; found old Grimshaw and his wife demented at the delay of tea; and were perfectly indifferent to the growls of the former, punctually echoed by the latter.

CHAPTER XIV.—THE HYPOCHONDRIAC DESPONDS; THE ECHO CHEERS UP; DR SNELL TRIUMPHS.

Of course the Grimshaws had a right to be informed of the accident which had happened in their garden; at least if the matter were not to be kept altogether secret, and if George Ewart intended to behave in the imbecile manner usually adopted by young men in his blissful position, who drop in at all hours from the country or the clouds, just to squeeze the handikin, or to muse upon the footlet, or to refresh their memories with respect to the eyebrow of the most beautiful of women. And it is not every old hypochondriac and every dutiful old Echo who would like to have under their roof a young lady engaged to be married, and therefore without much time to fulfil her other engagements. It has been said that Ewart was a fellow of considerable determination, and he therefore resolved to at once take the bull by the horns—that is to say, old Grimshaw by the button-hole (figuratively

speaking, for the hypochondriac was a man with whom few ventured upon familiarities), and his tale unfold. Accordingly, when he rose to take leave, he asked if he could speak a few words with Mr Grimshaw alone.

Old Grimshaw led the way to his little study, closed the door behind himself and Ewart, and then said anxiously and in a low voice to the latter: 'Is it Bright's disease you want to speak about?'

'Not exactly,' answered Ewart laughing; 'but nevertheless it is about a disease which is *nullis medicabilis herbis*.'

'What is it, then?' asked old Grimshaw testily.

'Plainly and briefly,' answered Ewart, 'I have asked Miss Finch to marry me.'

'Then you're a d——d ungrateful scoundrel.'

'Sir!'

'I beg your pardon for the expletive, Mr Ewart; I forgot your cloth.'

'Oh, hang the cloth and the expletive too. What do you mean, sir, by applying such terms to me?'

'Stay,' said Grimshaw with the air of one who sees a gleam of hope; 'but did she accept you?'

'Yes.'

'Then you are a — I mean, you are an ungrateful scoundrel.'

'Explain yourself, sir!' thundered Ewart in a tone which reached the Echo, and caused her to originate a remark on her own account of, 'Lawks! Miss Finch, whatever can they be talking about?' whilst Nelly blushed and stammered with embarrassment, and grew pale, and trembled with apprehension.

'Why, you *know* I've been better ever since she has been here; she has been my right hand and both my eyes; she makes me stuff that I can digest; she has mesmerised the *tic douloureux* almost out of me; she talks more sense and more religion than the bench of bishops; she makes me sometimes feel quite good. When I see her figure floating about, I get very nearly active again; and when I hear the sound of her voice, I fancy I could get up and dance to its music. And all for twenty pounds a year—exclusive of board, of course.'

'Well, sir, well!' exclaimed Ewart impatiently; 'but why am I ungrateful? and how dare you call me scoundrel?'

'Didn't I beg you to visit her freely?—and before I've had my bargain a year—before I've had a miserable twenty pounds' worth—in you step, and take her away. It's downright robbery.'

'You must be mad,' began Ewart; but old Grimshaw interrupted him, saying gravely and confidently: 'I'm not at all sure that I'm not, my good fellow. I am extremely sorry for the terms I used—pray, forgive me. Let us shake hands, and let me tell you that, in my candid opinion, you've done a good thing for everybody concerned except me. Fancy living alone again with Mrs Grimshaw! O Heavens!' and he uttered his pitiful remark with such a comic wail, that Ewart fairly burst out laughing.

'Of course, she can't go just yet,' said the hypochondriac.

'Well,' rejoined Ewart, 'the question was, whether she ought to remain with you under the circumstances. I have aunts who would gladly receive her until I have everything ready at my curacy, if you would object'—

'Object to a good twenty pounds' worth!' broke

in old Grimshaw. 'Let her stop the year, and I shall be able to say, that for once in my life I had a good twenty pounds' worth—now, do!'

'She herself said she would prefer to remain the year with you, if you thought fit to let her.'

'I wish she'd make it two—I wish she'd make it two; but—O no; of course not; I know it's not to be thought of—still, I'd make it forty pounds instead of twenty, if— Well, well, good-night, then, and I think you've done a good day's work. Come here, of course, whenever you like; and if you find me a little grumpy at first, recollect it will soon wear off.' And Ewart went his way to the friends with whom he was staying.

Old Grimshaw returned to the Echo and Nelly, and said to the former, as he waved his hand towards and bowed to the latter: 'Allow me, Mrs Grimshaw, to introduce you to the future Mrs Ewart.'

'Future Mrs Ewart!' duly repeated the Echo with an intonation expressive of various emotions.

'Allow me to offer you my sincere congratulations, Miss Finch,' continued old Grimshaw; and 'congratulations, Miss Finch,' came audibly from the direction of the Echo.

'Though whatever we shall do without you,' ejaculated the hypochondriac; and 'Do without you,' repeated the Echo in a tone which implied that she at least would be equal to the emergency.

Nelly received the congratulations with grateful smiles and silent content, took her candle, and retired to sleep the slowly coming but happy sleep of a maiden from whose heart a load has been lifted, who has begun to taste the chief of earthly joys, who lives and loves, is beloved (as she has been told), and engaged.

That same night, there was dialogue between the tasseled and the frilled night-caps. 'I knew she'd marry well,' grumbled the former.

'Well!' echoed the latter.

'Yes, well,' snarled the former. 'Don't you know he has bought a living worth six hundred a year?'

'Six—hundred—a year!'

'Yes, he told me so; and I call that well for a girl in Miss Finch's position.'

'In Miss Finch's position.'

'He may have to wait some time, though; there's that to be said.'

'There's that to be said.'

'If you're not glad, for her sake, Mrs Grimshaw, all I can say is, I am.'

'I am,' was repeated with some emphasis. The dialogue ceased, and soon Mrs Grimshaw was playing her usual part of echo to her husband's masterly performance on the nasal instrument.

After a day or two, Dr Snell called, and found that the course he had determined upon adopting for stopping Mrs Grimshaw's bilious tongue was not required. She had experienced a great revulsion of feeling upon hearing of the marriage to be; she took quite an early-morning opportunity of shewing her interest in the affair; she kissed Nelly, and begged to be treated as a mother by her, to whom she even apologised for the outburst of the day before, adding: 'I'm a stupid old woman, my dear, and I've a dreadful temper; and he is so harsh now, and he used to be so fond;' and the poor old thing fell upon Nelly's neck and wept, and Nelly wept upon her neck. The hypochondriac, on the contrary, looked discontentedly at Nelly, shook his head at her disapprovingly, and

complained at breakfast that she seemed determined to make his messes nicer than ever, that he might be the more disconsolate when she had gone. But he got no sympathy when he complained to Dr Snell. The doctor openly triumphed; told the hypochondriac many plain truths on the subjects of old age and selfishness; nearly got kicked out of the house; and, on descending the stairs, encountered Nelly.

'Come here, my dear,' said he, leading the way to the little waiting-room. Nelly tripped, smilingly and blushingly expectant, after him. 'Come here to me—closer—closer—that will do—there! take that!' and there was the peculiar sound most frequently heard when 'dear' Emily embraces 'dear' Laura, or when both are fondling 'dear' Caroline's baby.

'Doctor!' cried Nelly, springing back; 'why, you never took such a liberty before.'

'No, but I think I shall again,' said the doctor coolly: 'I like it.'

'I—daresay—you—do,' rejoined Nelly archly; 'but that is not the only consideration.'

'Well, well,' said the doctor resignedly, 'I dare-say you will have enough of it now without my assistance. But let me tell you, Mrs Ewart that will be hereafter, I feel as if you had done me, as well as Ewart, a personal kindness. I couldn't feel more pleased if I had brought you round from an attack of typhus.'

'Don't talk of such horrid things, doctor.'

'Oh, no, of course not *now*; life must be all roses *now*; cut all but the second batch of announcements from the first column of the *Times* *now*. But *I* can't afford to forget the first and the third, and I'm expected where they attach considerable importance to the first. So, good-bye, my dear, and—I really feel inclined to say—thank you.' And, as the doctor rushed to his carriage, he muttered to himself: 'She deserved to be married well; but, upon my word, when I sent that tonic in a white choker the other day, I had no idea it would produce such results—at anyrate so soon.'

HOUSE-MOVING.

The winter sunshine, bright and cold,

Falls on the floor—uncarpeted;

The pictures stacked against the wall,

And on the old dismantled bed.

The sale's to-day: an hour or two,

And greedy hands and staring faces,

Will peer, and pry, and analyse

In sacred rooms, and dear old places.

Well, life is but a shifting tent,

Time furls and pitches; moving, then,

Is but rehearsing graver things—

Playing at Death, who mocks at men.

So, let's mock Death: if suns be warm,

Flowers sweet, love dear, and June skies blue,

What matters here or there?—no jot,

So hearts be warm, and friends but true.